



Charity No. 1133758

## **Emmanuel Baptist Church Articles of Faith and Constitution**

These Articles of Faith and Constitution were originally drawn up and agreed in 1935. They were revised by the church membership at Emmanuel Baptist Church and agreed by the Old Baptist Union in May 1996. A further revision was made and agreed in 2005.

This most recent document was revised and agreed by the church meeting in July 2014 and agreed by the Old Baptist Union in June 2014.

Emmanuel Baptist Church is a local expression of the universal Christian Church. As a gathered community of God's people, we meet to worship; pray; study and follow God's word; share our faith and serve the wider community. *(See Appendix A for a fuller statement of our heart and ethos.)*

Emmanuel Baptist Church was founded in 1905 and moved to Howard Road in 1921. In May 2013, the Church moved to its present building on Victoria Avenue. It is a member church of the Old Baptist Union, a small group of wholly evangelical Baptist Churches, established in 1880. The Church is also affiliated to the Southern Counties Baptist Association through which it is able to enjoy the fellowship and share the work of Baptists in the immediate locality. It is the policy of the Church to co - operate wherever possible with other Christians in Swanage in advancing Christ's Kingdom in the town.

Every church member should read carefully the Church's doctrinal basis and constitution which are set out in detail in the Articles of Faith and Constitution. Further copies are available on request from either the Minister or Church Administrator.

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## **Articles of Faith**

**We believe** with all our hearts in the only true and living God, the Creator and Preserver of all things, visible and invisible; and that in the true unity of this Godhead there are three Persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

- “Baptising them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt.28:19).
- “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all”(2 Cor. 13:14).

**We believe** in the full inspiration of the Bible, accepting it as the Word of God, and regarding its teaching as of supreme and final authority in all matters of faith and practice.

- “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Tim. 3:16,17)
- “For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit”. (2 Peter 1:21).
- “Your Word is truth” (John 17:17)

**We believe** in the Bible doctrine of the Fall of Man, and in his consequent need of redemption through the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and of regeneration through the Holy Spirit. We believe also that God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance for which cause Christ commanded that the Gospel should be preached to every creature.

- “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned.” (Rom 5:12)
- “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Rom 5:8)
- “That Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, “You must be born again.” (John 3:6, 7)
- “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9)

**We believe** that, by His grace, and through the merits of Jesus Christ, God has made full provision for the salvation of all men, but that those only will be saved who repent of their sins, and accept Christ, by faith as their Saviour.

- “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)
- “He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.” (1John 2:2)
- “Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.” (John 3: 18)

**We believe** that all who truly repent and believe the Gospel should be baptized by immersion.

- “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19)

- “Repent, and be baptized every one of you” (Acts 2:38)
- “We are buried with Him by baptism into death” (Rom. 6:4)

**We believe** that those who are baptized should receive the “laying on of hands” in accordance with New Testament teaching and practice.

- “Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit” (Acts 8:17)
- “Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about cleansing rites, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment” (Heb 6:1,2)
- ” Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you.” (1Tim 4:14)

**We believe** in the Virgin Birth of the Lord Jesus Christ; and in His Deity and absolute Sinlessness.

- “The angel answered, ‘The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God’”(Luke 1:35)
- “In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.”(Heb. 1:1-3)
- “But about the Son he says, ‘Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever’” (Heb 1:8)

- “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” (1Peter 2:22)

**We believe** in Christ’s death upon the Cross as an atoning sacrifice for sin; we believe in his bodily Resurrection; in His Ascension into Heaven, there to “appear in the presence of God for us”, and in His personal Coming Again to receive His people to Himself, and to establish His Millennial Kingdom.

- “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.” (1 Peter 1:18, 19)
- “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and rose again the third day according to the scriptures.” (1 Cor 15:3,4)
- “After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.” (Heb 1:3)
- “So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him” (Heb 9:28)
- “For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever” (1 Thess 4:16, 17)
- “I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. ....They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.” (Rev 20:4)

**We believe** in the infallibility of Christ as a Teacher.

- “because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.” (Matt 7:29)
- “There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day.” (John 12:48)
- “I have given them your word.” (John 17:14)

**We believe** in the Personality and Deity of the Holy Spirit, and in His continued presence in the Church, and that His gifts may still be claimed and exercised, subject to His will.

- “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” (2 Cor13:14)
- “Then Peter said, ‘Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit....You have not lied just to human beings but to God.’” (Acts 5:3,4)
- “There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit ..... and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.” (1 Cor 12: 4, 11)
- “for God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable.” (Rom 11:29)

**We believe** in the existence of a personal Devil, the arch enemy of God and man, who deceives the whole world; and that, although his power is still great on earth, he is a defeated foe, doomed to final destruction.

- “Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.” (Matt 4:1)
- “Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith.” (1Peter 5: 8,9)

- “And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulphur. (Rev 20:10)

**We believe** that man is a being consisting of body, soul and spirit. We believe that the spirit can exist independently of the body, and that it continues in a state of consciousness between death and resurrection.

- “spirit, soul and body” (1Thess 5:23)
- “and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.” (Eccles 12:7)
- “I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God. They called out in a loud voice,” (Rev 6:9,10)
- “While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit’” (Acts 7:59)

**We believe,** but without being extremists, in the present day possibility and privilege of Divine Healing.

- “to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit” (1 Cor 12:9)
- “Is anyone among you ill? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. ” (James 5:14, 15)

**We believe** that we should observe the Lord’s Supper in accordance with our Saviour’s injunction.

- “the Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of

me.’ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.” (1 Cor 11:23-26)

**We believe** in the resurrection of the body, in the glorification of the redeemed, and in the “everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord” of the finally impenitent.

- “for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out – those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned” (John 5:28,29)
- “And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality. ” (1Cor 15:49, 53)
- “The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the blazing furnace, .... Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” (Matt 13:41-43)
- “Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.” (Rev 20:15)

**We believe** in the need of obedience to “all things whatsoever” Christ has commanded; and that the way of obedience is the way of sanctification, power and blessing.

- “Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.” (Matt 4: 4)
- “It is God’s will that you should be sanctified” (1 Thess 4:3)
- “Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth.” (1Peter 1:22)



- “to obedience, which leads to righteousness” (Rom 6:16)
- “Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me.” (John 14:21)

**We Believe** that marriage is the union between one man and one woman, ordained by God and acknowledged by the Lord Jesus Christ as attested to in the Scriptures. It is a building block for sound community and a safe place to bring up children.

- "So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame." (Gen 2 v21-25)
- "These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." (Deut 6 v 6-7)
- "Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?" "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' 5 and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? 6 So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate." (Matt 19 v3-6)

- "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— for we are members of his body. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband." (Eph 5 v21-33)
  
- "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honour your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise— "so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." (Eph 6 v1-4)

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## Constitution

### **1. Membership**

1. Any person who is professing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour, and, normally\*, has been baptised as a believer, and shows evidence of having received the Holy Spirit, and feels that God has guided them to belong, worship and serve with this church, and is willing to accept its Articles of Faith and Constitution, is eligible to be received into membership.

*\*N.B This church will always teach the necessity and benefits of believers' baptism and lovingly try to persuade, but it also recognises that for a few the issue is a matter of personal history and conscience.*

2. All applications for membership will be considered by the Leadership Team before being placed before the Church Meeting for acceptance.
3. A person's name may be removed from the church roll at the request of that person, or if church attendance has been neglected for over a year and there has been no response to a letter, or if after discussion with the Minister(s) and/or Leadership Team a person's conduct publicly continues to be incompatible with their Christian profession.

### **2. Meetings**

1. An Ordinary Church Meeting of members will be held quarterly. One of these will be the AGM when the church accounts will be approved, and reports from teams and departments received. Members wishing to include items for the agenda should do so in writing fourteen days before the meeting. At least one month's notice should be given of such a meeting.

2. a) Sometimes a Special Church Meeting will be required when the issue is too urgent or important to wait for the next Ordinary Church Meeting. At least one week's notice shall be given of such a meeting.  
b) Additional meetings whether Special or Ordinary shall be convened by the LT as necessary but they shall have specific responsibility to convene a Special Church Members' Meeting as soon as possible upon the receipt of a written request for a meeting signed by at least one tenth of the church membership or twelve Church Members, whichever is the less.
3. Members shall, as far as possible, prayerfully seek consensus on all matters; nevertheless, a resolution shall be carried if supported by a majority, as detailed below:
  - a) For an Ordinary Church Meeting, and a Special Church Meeting, the quorum is 30% of the membership, not including those hospitalised, housebound and living or working away at the time.
  - b) If a minister is to be appointed, an 80% majority vote where the quorum is 60%, is required.
  - c) Leaders require a 60% majority vote where the quorum is 30%. Paid staff will go through an interview process, agreeing with our Ethos statement, and more often than not, be/or become a Church Member in order to do so.
  - d) No alterations shall be made to the Leadership Structure or to this constitution without an 80% majority vote where the quorum is 60%.

In each case the quorum is a percentage of the membership, not including those hospitalised, housebound and living or working away at the time.

4. As stated above, our aim is to seek consensus; we gather together to discern the mind of Christ. Because of this corporate emphasis, postal voting and voting by proxy will not be accepted.

### **3. Minister**

1. A minister shall be appointed by an 80% majority vote at a Church Meeting but only after having agreed the Articles of Faith and Constitution of the Church and having gained the unanimous approval of the Leadership Team. The quorum for such a Church Meeting shall be 60% of the membership (as specified in 2.3b above), not including those hospitalised, housebound and living or working away at the time.
2. During the appointment process a Moderator (a Baptist minister who knows the church and has its confidence) may be invited to take the chair at interviews and Church Meetings.
3. Any new minister to be appointed to the Church, would then need to be recognised by the Old Baptist Union's accreditation process before being confirmed in post.
4. A minister's contract may be terminated at his or her own request, or by an 80% majority vote on a motion to that effect at a Church Meeting (quorum as in para. 2.3b above) with prior agreement of the Leadership Team.

### **4. Appointment of Leadership Team**

1. Besides a Minister, the Church shall appoint members as Leaders. We believe Leadership is about serving. It is not about position or power, but about being actively engaged in leading a part of the life and activity of the Church. We are committed to fostering a team culture, emphasising that a team is much more than a meeting.

- 2.** The Leadership Team normally consists of the Minister(s), Officers and other Leaders. Members of this team have equal status but different functions and responsibilities. Anyone leading a team or department within the Church, paid or unpaid, staff or volunteer, may be invited onto the Leadership Team with the approval of the Church Meeting. Officers, such as Treasurer and Secretary, shall be appointed from within the Leadership Team, as required.
- 3.** The Leadership Team will meet regularly, chaired by the Minister or their representative.
- 4.** Leaders will only be appointed if their lives meet the scriptural requirements of the office and they have been baptised as believers, and have been members of the church for over a year, and agree to uphold the Articles of Faith and Constitution.
- 5.** Nominations for the Leadership Team requires the recommendation of 4 church members, without discussion with the nominee, and should be submitted to the current Leadership for approval before being placed before the Church Meeting. A 60% majority vote of members present shall confirm an appointment, after which they will be presented to the Church at a Sunday service and prayed for. The quorum needed to make such appointments shall be 30% of the membership, as defined in 2.3c above. All such appointments shall be made by secret ballot.
- 6.** The number of Leaders may vary according to need, but should not normally exceed 10% of the membership.
- 7.** Leaders shall serve for a term of three years, after which they may stand for re-election. At the end of the second three year term of office, they cannot be re-elected until a period of one year has expired.
- 8.** It is recognised that there are a variety of leadership models that can serve the Church well. The names used to designate leaders and the

structure of leadership might change from time to time depending on which structure best serves the Church at any given time. Changes to leadership structures will require the understanding and approval of the whole Church as defined in 2.3d above.

## **5. Employment**

All paid employees to receive salary and conditions commensurate with duties, normally comparable with employment in similar secular jobs, and reviewed annually.

## **6. Changes to Constitution**

1. The Constitution shall be a “living document” that should be considered at regular intervals.
2. No alterations or amendments can be made to this constitution without an 80% majority vote at a Church Meeting, the quorum being 60% of the membership, not including those hospitalised, housebound and living or working away at the time. *(See 2.3d above)*
3. Any changes agreed at a Church Meeting to alter this constitution would then need to be considered and approved by the Old Baptist Union.

## **7. Trustees**

For the purpose of The Charities Act 2011, the Minister(s) and Leaders are presumed to be the Trustees of the Church and are accountable for decisions made in the course of the administration of the Church.

## **8. Land and Property**

1. Land and/or property held in connection with the Church is to be held by the Trustees of Land & Property who need not be a part of the

Leadership of the Church, but must be members of Emmanuel Baptist Church.

2. Land or property is held for the purposes of the Church. If land or property is sold then the proceeds are paid to the Church's general or project fund as shall be decided by the Church. 20% of the property value is held by the Trustees Old Baptist Union, as per the legal documentation.

## **9. Ultimate trust**

If the Trustees decide that the Church needs to close, then the monies held by the Church should be distributed to other Christian Evangelistic work.